

NSC BRIEFING

7 June 1955

BACKGROUND--GENEVA REFERENCES TO ALL-VIETNAM ELECTIONS

- I. The agreement for the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam, which is the document actually signed at Geneva by representatives of the commanders-in-chief of the Viet Minh army and the French Union forces in Indochina, makes only one brief reference to future elections.
 - A. This is contained in article 14(a) which states:

"Pending the general elections which will bring about the unification of Vietnam, the conduct of civil administration in each regrouping zone shall be in the hands of the party whose forces are to be regrouped there by virtue of this agreement."
- II. The main Geneva reference to elections in Vietnam is contained in the final declaration issued by the Conference Secretariat, the validity of which the South Vietnamese delegation refused to acknowledge.
 - A. Article 7 of this document states:

"The conference declares that, so far as Vietnam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general

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elections by secret ballot. In order that the restoration of peace may have made sufficient progress and that there may be present all the necessary conditions to permit the free expression of the national will, general elections will take place in July 1956, under the control of an international commission composed of representatives of the states which are members of the international commission for supervision and control provided for in the accord on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will take place on this subject between competent representative authorities of the two zones after July 20, 1955."

- B. The French Foreign Office recently stated that its legal office has interpreted this article as meaning that Vietnamese-Viet Minh contact should take place on 20 July 1955, and not just at some time subsequent thereto.